DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 471 652 TM 034 681

AUTHOR	McNeil, Keith
TITLE	What I've Learned, So Far, about Evaluation.
PUB DATE	2002-10-00
NOTE	16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Chattanooga, TN, November 6-8, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Evaluation Methods; *Evaluators; *Program Evaluation

ABSTRACT

An evaluation of the 4 x 4 block schedule in effect at Cleveland High School and East Side High School, both in the Cleveland, Mississippi School District was conducted during the 2001 spring semester at the request of the associate superintendent of the school district. Multiple sources of data were identified, and data were collected during the spring 2001 semester. These included archival records on student attendance, dropouts and grades, informal classroom observations, and survey results from 3 administrators, 15 teachers, and 90 students. Grade distributions did not appear to change significantly with the block schedule. The majority of the stakeholders involved in this evaluation favor the block scheduling practice and desire to see it continue. Teachers and administrators generally agreed that the block schedule allows time to cover the curriculum, but there was concern about the scope of the curriculum covered. Administrators thought there were fewer discipline problems with the block schedule, and the absentee rate appeared to have dropped. Findings suggest that dropout rates have decreased to some extent since block scheduling began in 1997-1998. Five appendixes contain detailed information on survey results, grade distributions, suspensions, attendance, and dropouts. (Contains 8 figures and 6 tables.) (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

TM TC
0040
TM

ED 471 652

What I've learned, So Far, about Evaluation

Keith McNeil

New Mexico State University

2002 MWERA Invited Presentation to

Division H: Evaluation

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. McNeil

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

TM034681

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

What I've learned, So Far, about Evaluation

Introduction

I have been evaluating programs for some 35 years now, and I still enjoy doing that, but I have acquired a little insight regarding the effort. I would like to share 5 things that I have learned, so far. These are:

1. Make sure that the Evaluator is involved early on.
2. The Evaluator and the Program Director should work jointly on the evaluation.
3. Evaluators need to combine hard and soft data.
4. The Evaluator must learn to compromise.
5. Most Program Directors do not want to be evaluated.

1. Make sure that the Evaluator is involved early on.

It is very crucial that the Evaluator is involved early on in the planning of the program so that the evaluation will dovetail with the program. The many evaluations that I have been asked to do when the program is almost finished are very frustrating and yield little information. The data collected is often not very relevant to the objectives, and is often fragmentary. The evaluation is usually one that is required and the Program Director is not interested in the results, only in getting a report to the funding agency. Needless to say, these last minute evaluations are usually one-year contracts and the relationship is not continued in future years. In most cases, the program has been funded for only one year as well.

There are three techniques that I have used to get myself on board early on. First, involvement in multiple year programs usually facilitates early involvement, especially after year 1. The five-year plan in Appendix A is a good way to provide the Program Director with the picture of what the evaluation will entail over those five years. This plan was, in fact, modified somewhat from year-to-year, but at least both the Evaluator and the Program Director had a pretty good picture of where the evaluation was headed.

Second, a planning meeting with the Program Director before the program starts in the next cycle (usually year) can focus on what has been changed since the last cycle. Maybe a new component has been included. Or more time is planned for one activity. Whatever the change is, if the Evaluator can get the Program Director to think about determining if that change produces a better program, then one purpose for the evaluation has been determined. And that purpose has

been jointly determined by the Evaluator and the Program Director. In actuality, this process works better if several program people meet with the Evaluator. There is less likelihood that the program people will feel intimidated, and the program people can provide each other with ideas.

When I was an internal Evaluator for the Dallas public schools, I evaluated a Title I program called A Priori. The program developers were constantly trying to improve the program, and in this case it was a very good program. The developers were quality people and so was the program. But they always began the first meeting each year with, "Well we have made these two changes, and we are particularly interested to see if they are making our program even more effective." What a wonderful way to start out each evaluation cycle--an invitation to evaluate the program, as well as identification of the focus for that cycle!

2. The Evaluator and the Program Director should work jointly on the evaluation.

Evaluators should have technical skills that Program Directors would not be expected to have. But Evaluators can be more effective if they work in consort with Program Directors. Evaluators do not know the program as well as the Program Director, nor do they know the Stakeholder as well. In many cases there are constraints on the Program Director or on the program that the Evaluator is unaware of. The days of the Evaluator riding in on the white horse and identifying and communicating truth are over (those days really never existed, though we may have pretended they did). One reason that I think evaluations have seldom been attended to is that a "technical expert" was trying to tell the Program Director how to run the program. Isadore Newman and I have written a draft textbook based on the premise that the Evaluator and the Program Director need to work together on almost every evaluation task. Indeed, the Evaluator usually takes the lead on most tasks, but does it make sense that the Evaluator would be the only one to report back the evaluation results to each of the Stakeholder groups? Or that the Program Director would not be involved in determining the scope of the evaluation plan? Appendix B contains our very approximate estimate of the percentage effort of each person on each task.

Several examples of reporting results might be informative. I had written the draft of the final report that summarized information across the 30 Head Start sites. In reviewing the draft report, the Program Director indicated that she was also interested in the results by site. As an outsider, I did not have that interest, but clearly she did. It took very little effort to analyze and report the results by site.

Another example of working hand-in-hand with the Program Director is attending Advisory Board meetings. My experience is that I can gain much information about the program and the pressures and constraints on the program by attending Advisory Board meetings. These meetings also offer an opportunity to share evaluation results and to gain the political support for evaluation.

I would like to share two examples of involving program staff in the reporting of information. Evaluators are notorious for producing voluminous reports that are of interest to them, but are often of little interest and value to the Program Director and of absolutely no value to the front-line staff who are implementing the program. Appendix C contains a caricature of the A Priori classroom that we shared with the A Priori teachers after we had made a round of classroom visitations. It should be noted that the A Priori program was a scripted curriculum, which the teachers were supposed to follow on a daily schedule. It was a pull-out program, so the teachers repeated themselves about five times each day. Typical teacher caricature was used to report a set of classroom implementation results. The typical "teacher" was constructed, as in Exhibit 12.3. The typical "nerd" or typical "valley girl" provided the inspiration for this technique. Process information that the Evaluators wanted to report to teachers was incorporated into the drawing of the teacher and surroundings. For instance, the teacher was wearing an "I Love A Priori" sweatshirt showing that the teachers were very enthusiastic about the program called "A Priori." On the other hand, the trash basket had become the resting place for one poem that was supposed to be used during the observational period, but was not used by any teachers. Teachers participated in discovering the messages in the typical "teacher." The picture was crudely drawn, adding a further touch of informality to the method.

Teachers were handed the drawing and asked to figure out what it depicted. Teachers enthusiastically tried to discover the hidden messages. Teachers easily grasped the notion that each was not being depicted, that the picture was a summary of all the teachers that the Evaluators had seen. Although only a small part of the evaluation information was shared in this way, the teachers were provided with a visual image of the results that was easy to interpret, and that communicated evaluation information that was of relevance to them. Since the goal of any reporting effort should be to maximize the amount of information that the Stakeholders retain (rather than maximize the amount of information that the Stakeholders are given), this reporting method seems to have face validity as a useful method. One can only guess how many teachers pinned the picture on their bulletin board.

The Gong Show was an unabashed attempt for the developer of many game shows, Chuck Barris, to have fun by doing his own thing on his own TV Show. Chuck Barris was the host, and contestants were allowed to show their talents on national TV. A panel of celebrities judged the talent on a 1 to 10 scale. When the talent was judged bad enough, the contestant was gonged and not allowed to finish the act. The gonger had to defend the reason for gonging, which usually did not take much explanation, and made for rich humor.

With my impetus, a team of three Evaluators and three Program Directors planned a Gong Show presentation for reporting classroom observations of the implementation of several teaching strategies. The Program Directors had previously trained the teachers on the specific teaching techniques. The Evaluators were responsible for determining if and how well the teachers were currently implementing the strategies in the classrooms. Essential to successful implementation was the correct order of components in each strategy, as well as the correct implementation.

Each Program Director began to implement one strategy correctly and then purposefully either did something wrong, used components out of order, slowly self-destructed, or disintegrated. One other Program Director would gong the act and explain why the act was gonged. Then one Evaluator shared whether these same problems were or were not observed in the classrooms.

Although this reporting method required extensive planning between the Evaluators and the Program Directors, the teachers enthusiastically received it. In reality, the functions of staff development and evaluation had been blended. The teachers received a different dose of the strategies. The teachers became involved with the Gong Show, watching closely for mistakes, even though they respected the Program Directors very much. Teachers began to hiss when mistakes occurred, and the hissing got louder when the Program Director was way off the accepted implementation process.

During the planning of the Gong Show, one of the Program Directors was somewhat hesitant to use this approach with the group for which she was responsible. However, when she saw the reaction of the teachers and realized the staff development benefits of this reporting method, she requested that her group also be given the Gong Show.

While those who conducted the Gong Show were positive about the experience, such a reporting method would not always work. For instance, there was a lot of planning required between two units in an organization that often did not communicate well. In addition, such a

presentation requires a certain personality of the presenters, and certain camaraderie between the audience and the presenters. Finally, the impact of the Gong Show method would seriously be diminished if the content of the report was not appropriate or if the method had recently been used. For the right time and the right place, the Program Directors, the Evaluators, and the teachers had some fun, and the teachers improved in their ability to implement the program.

3. Evaluators need to combine hard and soft data.

I started evaluating programs in the late 60s. Back in the Dark Ages evaluations was viewed as a go-no go endeavor. We did have stables of white horses then and Program Directors had every right to fear us. We didn't have many tools, relying on statistics and research design to get us through the evaluation. For me the CIPP model was an eye-opener and I quickly embraced the notion of looking at the Context within which the program operated, the Input of funds and staff , and Process of implementing the program, as well as the traditional Product of all these previous endeavors. While I still feel that the ultimate goal of any program should be to produce some result, I strive to be cognizant of the constraints and challenges along the way. The hard information must be combined with the soft information. Neither can stand alone. Squeezing out impressive results at the expense of the feelings of staff and participants is not good practice. Neither is getting bad results from staff and recipients that feel the program is the best thing since sliced bread. Appendix D is a compendium of kinds of information that could be obtained from various sources. Note that much of the information would be categorized in the 'soft' range.

4. The Evaluator must learn to compromise.

The hardest lesson that I have learned is to compromise. The compromises are not only a function of the available funds, but also the interests of the Program Director. In many cases the statistical and research design notions are either not apprcciated or are beyond the training of the Program Director or the Stakeholder. Evaluators have to speak the language and be willing to modify plans. The compromise may be to test fewer participants than desired. In one case I have had to try to convince the Program Director to test fewer participants because of the cost and time involved in her staff testing the participants.

5. Most Program Directors do not want to be evaluated.

I suppose that I didn't need to identify this fifth point. It's pretty easy to figure that out

early in your career. But I keep hoping that the next evaluation will be like the two that really went well as a result of the Program Director wanting to know how well the program succeeded and how to make it better along the way. I often try to convince myself that this particular evaluation will be "the one." I try to fight off reality as long as I can. I try to disbelieve reality, and continue to hope for the ideal. Appendix E contains a figure depicting what I think is the breakdown of Program Directors with respect to how they view evaluation. The positive sections are probably not as large in reality.

Appendix F contains a little scenario regarding how the powers to be tried to intimidate me in an evaluation. The outside contractor, who did not want to know the answer to the question,"Does the million dollars a year spent on this program benefit the children?" still has that contract with the Dallas Schools.

Appendix G depicts the story of how the entire evaluation team got kicked out of staff development because we dared to recommend some changes. Those very changes were implemented the following staff development, but the evaluation team was not given credit. In fact the whole team was reassigned to other programs the following year.

Next Steps

Will I continue to evaluate programs? Yes, for five reasons. First, I feel that I often represent the taxpayer. The taxpayers are footing the bill, and they need to be reassured that the money is being used in the best possible way. Second, I enjoy leaving the Ivory Tower to assist State and Federally funded entities. I feel like I am not only contributing my taxes, but making sure they are doing the most good. Third, the evaluation contracts keep me in touch with good people, both on the program side as well as on the evaluation side. Fourth, the extra dollars come in handy.

Appendix A
Five year plan

Timeline for Evaluation Activities

Year 1 (focus is on Context and Input)	months
1. Clarify evaluation questions with Stakeholders	1
2. Catalog existing data	2
3. Finalize evaluation plan and get Board approval	1
4. Design procedures for new data collection	1
5. Collect new data	2
7. Develop reports	1
8. Deliver reports	1
9. Clarify evaluation for year 2	.2

Year 2 (focus is on Process)	months
1. Finalize evaluation plan and get Board approval	.3
2. Catalog existing data	.3
3. Design procedures for new data collection	.5
4. Collect new data	
attend Transition activities	1
interview LEA staff	.5
interview Board	.2
interview Educational Specialist for Transition	.3
survey parents	1
interview students	1
survey LEA	1
survey Head Start staff	.5
interview Head Start central office staff	.2
5. Analyze all data	3
6. Develop reports	1
7. Deliver reports	1
8. Clarify evaluation for year 3	.2

Year 3 (focus is on Process)	months
1. Finalize evaluation plan and get Board approval	.3
3. Design procedures for new data collection	.5
4. Collect new data	
attend Transition activities	1
interview LEA staff	.5
interview Board	.2
interview Educational Specialist for Transition	.3
survey parents	1

interview students	1
survey LEA	1
survey Head Start staff	.5
interview Head Start central office staff	.2
5. Analyze all data	3
6. Develop reports	1
7. Deliver reports	1
8. Clarify evaluation for year 4	.2

Year 4 (focus is on Product)	months
1. Catalog existing data	2
2. Finalize evaluation plan and get Board approval	.1
3. Design procedures for new data collection	.8
4. Collect new data	3
attend Transition activities	
interview Board	
interview Educational Specialist for Transition	
interview parents	
survey parents	
survey LEA staff	
collect LEA student-level data from records	
5. Analyze all data	3
6. Develop year 4 report	2.5
7. Deliver reports	.5

Year 5 (focus is on Product)	months
1. Catalog existing data	2
2. Finalize evaluation plan and get Board approval	.1
3. Design procedures for new data collection	.8
4. Collect new data	3
attend Transition activities	
interview Board	
interview Educational Specialist for Transition	
interview parents	
survey parents	
survey LEA staff	
collect LEA student level data from records	
5. Analyze all data	3
6. Develop year 5 report	1
7. Develop final report	1.5
8. Deliver reports	.5

Appendix B

Approximate involvements of Program Director and Evaluator in each of the 39 tasks of the General Evaluation Model

Task	Percent time on task	
	Program Director	Evaluator
1. Identify Stakeholders	90	10
2. Identify program areas	90	10
3. Identify sources of information	20	80
4. Develop the Needs Assessment instrument	20	80
5. Conduct the Needs Assessment	50	50
6. Write the Needs Assessment report	20	80
7. Disseminate to Stakeholders	80	20
8. Make sure Stakeholders buy into program	90	10
9. Determine instrument(s)	10	90
10. Determine comparison group(s)	10	90
11. Administer Baseline	20	80
12. Analyze information	00	100
13. Write report	20	80
14. Disseminate the Baseline report	30	70
15. Draft program objectives	70	30
16. Share program objectives with Stakeholders	70	30
17. Finalize program objectives	50	50
18. Develop procedures	90	10
19. Train staff	90	10
20. Determine that training was implemented well	20	80
21. Develop Program Implementation Evaluation plan	20	80
22. Identify instruments	20	80
23. Develop instruments (if necessary)	20	80
24. Inform Stakeholders periodically	60	40
25. Context information collected and analyzed	20	80
26. Input information collected and analyzed	40	60
27. Process Implementation Assessment information collected and analyzed	30	70
28. Write report	20	80
29. Relate to objectives and procedures to achieve	40	60
30. Disseminate the reports	80	20
31. Develop Post Assessment plan	10	90
32. Identify instruments	10	90
33. Develop instruments (if necessary)	10	90
34. Collect Post Assessment information	05	95

35. Analyze all information	00	100
36. Write End-Of-Cycle report	20	80
37. Relate to objectives and procedures to achieve	20	80
38. Disseminate the report(s)	60	40
39. Determine evaluation for next cycle	20	80

Appendix C

Caricature of the A Priori classroom

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

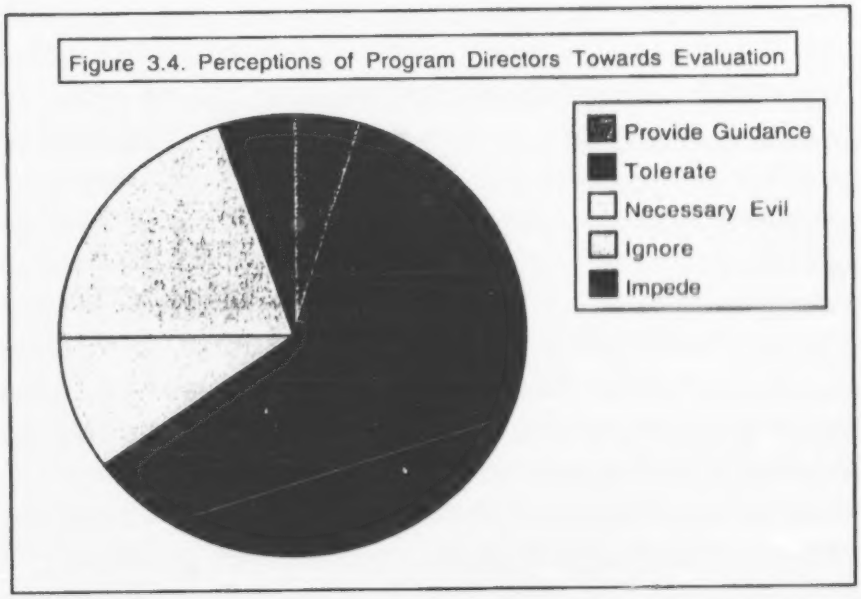
Appendix D

Compendium of kinds of information that could be obtained from various sources

Sources of information	Examples of information
Recipients	Performance on standardized tests
	Attitudes
	Career choices
	Attendance at special events
Staff	Attendance at in-service
	In-service implementation
	Attitude about program
	Turnover rate and reasons
	Innovative implementation of program
Relatives of recipients	Attitudes of recipients
	Behavior outside of program
	Comparison to older siblings
	Perceptions of community
Community members	Attitude toward program goals
	Perceptions of success of program
	Willingness to volunteer in program
Existing records	Attendance by recipients and relatives
	Discipline referral rate
	Staff performance evaluations
	Staff turnover
	All above information in comparison locations
Unobtrusive information	Amount of litter surrounding building
	Respect for "Do Not Walk" on grass signs
	Appropriate noise level (low during quite time, but high during get noisy time)

Appendix E

The breakdown of Program Directors with respect to how they view evaluation.



Appendix F

Scenario regarding how the powers to be tried to intimidate me in an evaluation

When I was an inside Evaluator for the DISD, I was assigned to evaluate all aspects of several new schools. After a less than positive implementation report was disseminated, I was called in to the Superintendent's office and was told that this program was the most effective program that the Superintendent had ever been associated with. An outside contractor who knew how to pull political weight was running the program for approximately 1 million dollars a year. The Superintendent and I met that first and last time. Both are now gone from the DISD, but the political pull contractor is still in business there.

Appendix G

How the entire evaluation team got kicked out of staff development

I was in charge of evaluating the Dallas Independent School District Chapter 1 program. Staff development was held once a month all day on Friday. The topic for several months was adding a bilingual component to the existing program. Trainers were hired from the outside. The sessions were boring and provided no "hands-on" materials for the participants. Examples for the classroom came from teaching French-speaking children in English-speaking schools in Canada and the indigenous Mauri in Australia, and not from teaching recent immigrants from Mexico, which comprised approximately 90% of the students of the participants. Participants would sign in when they arrived in the morning, but many of the 300 were leaving at noon to go back to their class (instead of returning for the afternoon continuation).

The above problems were identified by me to the Program Director, along with recommendations to make the sessions more interesting, to provide examples relevant to the Mexican population, and a mechanism for keeping attendance in the afternoon. The Program Director was upset with the recommendation and the evaluation team was told to not return for the remaining staff development sessions. But one of the Evaluators was new to the district, and therefore unknown. She was asked by the head Evaluator to return to the next staff development session and to keep a low profile among the 300 participants. She reported that (1) attendance was taken at both morning and afternoon, (2) door prizes were given based o afternoon attendance, (3) and most importantly, the only examples mentioned were related to the Mexican children. The evaluation of staff development, particularly checking on assumptions had a positive impact on this series of staff development. (Note: the Program Director never did make amends and never did share with the evaluation team that these changes were made.)

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

TM034681

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: What I've Learned, So Far, about Evaluation

Author(s): Keith McNeil

Corporate Source:

Publication Date: 10/17/02

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☒

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only.

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, please

Signature: Keith McNeil	Printed Name/Position/Title: Keith McNeil Professor
Organization/Address: New Mexico State University	Telephone: 505 646 2124 FAX: 505 646 8035
	E-Mail Address: kmcneil@nmsu.edu Date: 11/21/02

(Over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
1129 SHRIVER LAB
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20742-5701
ATTN: ACQUISITIONS

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfacility.org

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2001)